



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

June 1-June 15, 2009

INFRASTRUCTURE

Power from Uzbekistan Reaches Kabul via a New Transmission Line:

Electricity heats homes, provides light, and powers businesses, contributing to economic growth and higher living standards. Bringing more electricity to Kabul is a key goal of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and on May 7, Kabul received 40 megawatts (MW) of power purchased from Uzbekistan. The electricity flowed for 400 km over the rugged Hindu Kush mountain range via a newly energized 220 kV transmission line. This electricity will light over 32,000 homes and provide urgently needed power to create jobs and improve the lives of the people of Kabul.

The electricity arrived in Kabul thanks to the cooperative efforts of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the U.S. Government, and a number of other international donors including the World Bank, the Government of India, the Government of Germany, and the Asian Development Bank. The cost of purchasing power from Uzbekistan is significantly less than the cost of diesel-powered electricity generation, allowing more Afghans access to power.



President Karzai energizes a substation to begin the transfer of electricity from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan.

PHOTO: USAID/IRP



The first class of engineers improve their knowledge of Afghanistan's energy sector.

PHOTO: USAID/AECP

Postgraduate Training Strengthens Afghanistan's Energy Sector:

Graduates of Kabul Polytechnic University now have the opportunity to become better energy-sector engineers thanks to an innovative new two-year training program. Through classroom and on-the-job training in Afghanistan and India, participants will gain the skills and practical knowledge necessary to become skilled utility engineers able to operate and maintain Afghanistan's power sector infrastructure.

This year, 32 students were admitted to the program, which is conducted by USAID in cooperation with Kabul Polytechnic University, Ministry of Energy and Water, Da Afghanistan Brishna Shirkat (DABS – Afghanistan Power Utility), and the National Power Training Center of India (NPTI). At a launch ceremony earlier this year, H.E. Dr. Jalil Shams, CEO of DABS, praised program's focus on capacity-building and said, "USAID's Induction Program for recent



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graduates is an excellent example of effective, collaborative assistance for Afghanistan to rebuild its nation through developing its people and, in doing so, to realize self sufficiency.”

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE

Kabul AgFair Promotes Fresh Produce and Facilitates Business Deals:

“Afghanistan has sparked the interest and the appetite – literally the appetite – of the world,” said U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry on the opening day of the Kabul International Fresh Fruit and Vegetable AgFair. The AgFair, held from May 20-22, attracted an estimated 50,000 people to forge business deals and celebrate Afghanistan’s abundance of fresh produce ranging from pomegranates to spinach.

More than 180 international and national businesses, ranging from honey producers to machinery providers, displayed their wares at the AgFair. The fair’s productivity center provided 3,000 Afghan farmers, students and government staff insight into improved agricultural methods ranging from grape trellising and soil testing to cashmere harvesting and drip irrigation.

Business-to-business meetings brought together leading agribusiness representatives from Afghanistan and ten other countries, generating business deals and building international partnerships. For example, a representative of Case-New Holland, a leading manufacturer of agricultural and construction equipment, said the company will select an Afghan entrepreneurs to sell its machinery in Afghanistan. Herat Nursery Association Representative Abdul Aziz Popal said, “The fair not only provided me with an opportunity to exhibit and show my products, but also gave me a chance to meet national and international buyers. This will not only benefit me, but also the real producers who are the farmers.”

Afghanistan has hosted ten AgFairs throughout the country since early 2007. Organized by USAID in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock; the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency; and the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan, the events have generated millions of dollars in business deals and have raised the profile Afghanistan’s agricultural sector to the global level.



An AgFair attendee inspects a display of Afghanistan's fresh produce.

PHOTO: USAID/Julie Fossler



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ECONOMIC GROWTH

Afghan Women's Business Federation Spring Expo Showcases Members' Handicrafts:

On May 18, the Afghan Women's Business Federation (AWBF) celebrated the opening of its Spring Expo. The exhibition featured handmade goods, such as clothing, jams, and jewelry, produced by AWBF member businesses. The Deputy Ministers of Women's Affairs, Culture, and Commerce all attended the event and praised AWBF's efforts to promote economic opportunities for women.

Founded in 2004 with support from USAID and the Ministry of Commerce, AWBF has grown to become an umbrella organization for 87 women's business associations, companies, and artisans across Afghanistan. In addition to its exhibitions, AWBF supports women entrepreneurs through advocacy, workshops, trade missions, match-making events, and mentorship programs.



Women entrepreneurs enjoyed brisk sales at the AWBF Spring Expo.

PHOTO: USAID/Amy Koler



Nangarhar Beekeepers Association Manager Manzoor Ahmad proudly displays honey processed in Afghanistan.

PHOTO: USAID/Sarah Siegel

Afghanistan's First Honey Processing and Packaging Facility Opens:

On April 25, the first honey processing and packaging plant in eastern Afghanistan began operations. The facility can process 800 kg of honey per day, all of which is collected from approximately 600 local beekeepers in Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman, and Nuristan. Managed by the Nangarhar Beekeepers Association, the facility will play a vital role in the development of the beekeeping sector in Afghanistan. With modern honey processing capabilities, Afghan honey producers will be able to market and sell consistently high-quality honey to new domestic and international markets.

Prior to the establishment of the honey facility, most raw honey produced in the region was exported to Pakistan, where it was processed and sold as a product of that country. This denied Afghan entrepreneurs the opportunity to produce an export-ready product labeled 'made in Afghanistan.' Now, Afghanistan will be better positioned to export directly to end-market countries, facilitating trade opportunities and economic growth.



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At the May 2009 Kabul International Fresh Fruit and Vegetable AgFair, the Nangarhar Beekeepers Association (NBA) did brisk business, selling different varieties of honey to Afghan and international buyers. Proud to be able to sell processed honey made entirely in Afghanistan, NBA Manager Manzoor Ahmad said, "Our honey is the best in the world, but without processing, it wouldn't sell. Now it will sell well."



A teacher learns to use a microscope.

PHOTO: USAID/BESST

EDUCATION

Microscopes Improve Biology Education: The majority of teachers in rural areas of Afghanistan have never seen a microscope. Of those that have, only a small number use them in classroom exercises that improve students' understanding of biology. Recently, Teacher Learning Circles – where teachers from neighboring schools discuss new teaching techniques – in Jawzjan and Sari Pul provinces focused on how to use microscopes, which had just been distributed to schools.

The teachers learned the basics of microscope operation, viewing onion slices to illustrate cellular structure and examining dirty water to detect simple organisms. After the training, the teachers all said they

could not wait to show their students what they had learned. "None of us had participated before in this kind of experiment, which makes the process of teaching so interesting," explained Ms. Safia, a teacher at Misrabad Girl's High School in Shibirghan, Jawzjan.

A total of 7,400 teachers from Jawzjan and Sari Pul – all of the high school teachers in those two provinces – will receive training on microscope use over the coming weeks, and tens of thousands of students will benefit from their teachers' increased capacity to teach biology.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM

USAID Helps Flood Victims Rebuild: Recent floods in Afghanistan's northern and western provinces destroyed the homes and belongings of thousands of people. In addition, roads, irrigation canals, and other infrastructure were significantly damaged. In Baghlan and Kunduz provinces, USAID launched a number of community-based projects to clean up flood damage while providing much needed income for those affected by the floods. In one Kunduz district, a cash-for-work project is providing temporary employment to local residents, who are cleaning and repairing the houses and streets in their community. In another district, workers are building a flood protection wall to prevent future damage. Programs such as these, that provide Afghans with the resources to rebuild their own towns in the aftermath of a disaster, are essential to strengthening communities and local stability.



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DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Parliamentarians Visit Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland: Working constructively with former adversaries to build a stable, prosperous country is just one of the challenges that Afghanistan's Parliamentarians face every day. To strengthen the peace-building process in Afghanistan, a delegation of Afghan legislators traveled to the Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland, learning from government and non-government actors who made peace in Northern Ireland a reality.

The group met with some of the most active and staunch leaders from *The Troubles*, with whom they spoke about peace building and reconciliation. This included a joint session with Northern Ireland Assembly First Minister Peter Robinson (Democratic Unionist Party) and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness (Sinn Féin). Assembly members presented lessons learned from the conflict and peace process, showing that former opponents can work together for the country's common good. The MPs also learned how formal peace agreements can make the reconciliation process tangible, and that former militia can become part of the peace process through transition to non-violent political activities.



Afghan MPs met with Northern Ireland Assembly First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness.

PHOTO: USAID/APAP



USAID Representative Tanya Urquieta hands a certificate to a KCC graduate.

PHOTO: USAID/CDP

Kunar Construction Center Celebrates 4th

Graduating Class: On May 12, 2009, 116 skilled craftsmen graduated from the Kunar Construction Center (KCC) – the fourth graduating class in just over a year. During their three-month training course, formerly unemployed young men from eastern Afghanistan earned certifications in carpentry, electrical work, masonry, painting, plumbing, or rebar placement. The KCC opened on March 13, 2008 and demonstrates the determination and vision of local, provincial, and international communities – and the military – committed to working together to rebuild Afghanistan.

"The combination of high-quality vocational training and regional reach makes the Kunar Construction Center a model for Afghanistan as a whole," said USAID Representative Tanya Urquieta in her address



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at the ceremony. “In putting their training to work, today’s graduates are playing an immediate and active role in the development and reconstruction of their country.”

Following the graduation ceremony, the Center hosted a job fair where the construction companies examined the students’ work and discussed employment opportunities. Center graduates have a high success rate in finding employment in the construction industry, which is one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the country.